

QA-146

Queen Anne's County Courthouse

Architectural Survey File

This is the architectural survey file for this MIHP record. The survey file is organized reverse-chronological (that is, with the latest material on top). It contains all MIHP inventory forms, National Register nomination forms, determinations of eligibility (DOE) forms, and accompanying documentation such as photographs and maps.

Users should be aware that additional undigitized material about this property may be found in on-site architectural reports, copies of HABS/HAER or other documentation, drawings, and the “vertical files” at the MHT Library in Crownsville. The vertical files may include newspaper clippings, field notes, draft versions of forms and architectural reports, photographs, maps, and drawings. Researchers who need a thorough understanding of this property should plan to visit the MHT Library as part of their research project; look at the MHT web site (mht.maryland.gov) for details about how to make an appointment.

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Last Updated: 01-27-2020

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Queen Anne's County Court House

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Court House Square

CITY, TOWN

Centreville

___ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1st

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Queen Anne's**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT☒ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☒ PUBLIC☐ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☐ YES: RESTRICTED☒ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ MUSEUM☐ COMMERCIAL☐ PARK☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ RELIGIOUS☒ GOVERNMENT☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ MILITARY☐ OTHER**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Queen Anne's County Commissioners

Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Centreville

___ VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code
Maryland 21617**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Liber #:

Folio #:

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

QA-146

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Queen Anne's County Court House is located in the center of Court House Square in Centreville. The square is bounded on the east by North Commerce Street, on the north by Broadway, on the west by North Liberty Street, and on the south by Lawyers Row. This square was originally described as the Public Ground and has been the site of the Court House since the town was laid out in 1792.

The Court House faces east toward Commerce Street. It is a brick building with a three part facade, and has been enlarged to the rear to form the present T-plan. The front facade consists of a five bay, two story center block with flanking two bay, two story wings. Evidently the center block was two rooms deep, while the wings were one room deep. When the Court House was renovated in 1876, the building was enlarged by doubling the depth of the wings and by adding a two story rear wing to the central block, forming the present T-plan.

The front facade of the main block is five bays wide, with the three center bays set forward about four inches from the rest of the wall. A pedimented gable is centered above these three bays,

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

CONTINUATION SHEET

7.1 DESCRIPTION

increasing the sense of frontality. The principal entrance door is centered on this part of the facade, flanked by large 6/6 windows on each side. There are matching 6/6 windows in the north and south bays, flanking the projecting portion of the wall. On the second floor, five 6/6 windows with segmentally arched upper sash are arranged in similar fashion. These windows clearly date to the 1876 renovation, but probably reflect the original fenestration pattern. The jambs of most of the openings appear to be reworked, and were presumably enlarged for the present windows. Carefully dressed stone sills with beveled surfaces and lintels with chamfered edges also date to the 1876 work. On the second story, the stonework forms a plain belt course and is carried across the tops of the windows, forming a peak above each arched opening. Other changes include an added water table constructed of smooth machine made brick laid in stretcher bond with a two-course beveled cap, and a cast iron balcony across the center three bays of the second story. The late 19th century brickwork is in stark contrast to the original work, which is carefully laid in Flemish bond with hand-made bricks. An original four-course belt course at the base of the second story has been interrupted by the enlarged second story

CONTINUATION SHEET

7.2 DESCRIPTION

windows. A heavily molded cornice with large scrolled modillion blocks is carried across the entire facade of the central block and up the raked eaves of the pedimented gable. In the center of this pediment, a circular wooden panel with a carved figure of an eagle is set into a circular opening in the brickwork. This feature is of uncertain vintage, but certainly dates to the 1876 period at least, and may be early if not original.

The south flanking wing serves as the Clerk of the Court's office. There is a door in the center on the first floor flanked by single 6/6 windows on each side, and two 6/6 windows on the second floor. The first floor openings have also been fitted with dressed stone sills and lintels, and the second floor openings with stone sills, leaving the original splayed jack arch lintels visible just below the cornice. The original Flemish bond brickwork remains relatively undisturbed except for the applied water table, and the addition of the stonework around the openings. The sills of the second story windows cut down into the top course of an original three-course belt course. The cornice on this section of the building is boxed in with a plain frieze board below the soffit and a complex crown mold above.

CONTINUATION SHEET

7.3 DESCRIPTION

The south gable wall of the south wing offers clear evidence of the 1876 enlargement. A seam runs vertically up the center of this wall, with Flemish bond brickwork to the east and six-course bond using smooth machine-made bricks to the west. The water table added in 1876 was also carried across the south gable. There are two original 6/6 windows with later granite sills on the first floor of the original wing, and one 6/6 window on the second floor of the west addition. The box cornice of the front and rear facade returns at the corners and is carried up the gable eaves.

The rear or west facade of the wing dates entirely to 1876. There is a single 6/6 window centered on both the first and second floor. The first floor window is fitted with heavy iron shutters. The brickwork is laid in random common bond with a water table; the cornice matches the front and south wall.

The north flanking wing serves as the Register of Wills office. There is a door in the south bay on the first floor with a 6/6 window to the north and two 6/6 windows on the second floor. In detail this wing is virtually identical to the south wing.

The north gable wall of the north wing evidently was originally uninterrupted by windows. The brickwork is laid in Flemish bond and the general line of the

CONTINUATION SHEET

7.4 DESCRIPTION

original gable remains visible. In 1876 this wing was doubled in depth. The seam between the original section and the addition is clearly visible, and the later brickwork is laid in common bond with machine-made brick. A water table was also added, extending across the entire gable wall. A large 2/2 window was cut in near the center on the first floor and a small, paired four-light window was added on the second floor. The gable eaves are closed in with an overshot box cornice that returns at the corners, and matches the cornice on the front facade of the wing.

The rear facade of the north wing dates entirely to 1876. There are two 6/6 windows on both the first and second floors. The openings have segmental arched lintels and granite sills. The brickwork is laid in six-course bond with a water table; the cornice matches the front facade of the wing.

The rear or west wing was constructed in 1876. The brickwork is laid in six-course bond but without a water table. On the north wall, there are three 6/6 windows on each floor. The south wall is essentially identical, except that the east window on the first floor has been blocked. On the west wall, facing Liberty Street, there is a recessed panel in the center bay on each floor flanked by two 6/6 windows on each side.

CONTINUATION SHEET

7.5 DESCRIPTION

All of the window openings have segmental arched lintels and granite sills. The cornice is a continuation of the early modillion block cornice found on the front and side walls of the original central block. Mitred seams in the cornice correspond to the original rear wall of the building. The roof of the rear addition is hipped and covered with slate.

The interior of the Court House is divided into three principal areas on the first floor. A central hall in the main block leads back to office space in the later rear wing, and to a narrow stair leading to the cellar and a modern records room. The stair to the second floor rises against the north wall of the hall, just inside the front door. It is an open-string stair with a hewn Victorian newel, turned ballusters and a molded rail. All of the trim in the hall dates to the Victorian period, with the possible exception of the front double doors, which are constructed of diagonal beaded boards with a heavily molded frame applied to the exterior surface.

The Clerk's office, to the south of the hall, occupies the original south wing and a second large room to the west that was added in 1876. The latter room was evidently intended as a vault, as the windows are shuttered with heavy iron shutters, and the interior

CONTINUATION SHEET

7.6 DESCRIPTION

door opening is fitted with a heavy vault door with a lock made in Baltimore. The floors in both rooms are paved with brick, all of the trim is Victorian.

The Register of Wills office occupies the north wing, and cannot be reached from the central hall. This office is divided into a large room in the wing, with a narrow vault across the north end of the Court House. The floor of the vault is lined with brick; the ceiling is vaulted. A door at the west end of the office opens into the vault and is fitted with a heavy vault door. All of the trim is Victorian. A chimney shaft on the north gable wall of the original wing has been paneled over.

On the second floor, a narrow hall stretches across the front facade of the central block. Doors open off of this hall into a large rectangular court room in the center of the building, a grand jury room over the south wing, and a law library over the north wing. Details of interest on the second floor include a coffered tin ceiling with cast iron column supports and a variety of Victorian furniture in the court room. Of particular significance are the twelve jury chairs, three chairs behind the bench, and the witness chair. All are bentwood chairs with tightly caned backs and seats.

CONTINUATION SHEET

7.7 DESCRIPTION

According to the report prepared by Perry, Shaw and Hepburn, portions of the original roof framing survive. The roof over the main central section of the building is not readily accessible. The only access point is a small trap secured with screws in the high ceiling of the court room. A second trap in the north end of the building allows a limited view of the roof of the enlarged north wing. The framing all dates to the post-Civil War enlargement, but a small section of the masonry wall of the central section is visible, as well as one portion of the original dentil block cornice.

PERIOD

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/ <u>GOVERNMENT</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Centreville Court House was constructed circa 1792-94 and enlarged in 1876. It is believed to be the oldest court house in Maryland in continuous use. The building is an interesting blend of Colonial and Victorian architecture, with the basic form, fenestration pattern and brickwork dating to the late 18th century, and the window sash, balcony and decorative stonework dating to the 1876 renovation. This renovation included enlarging the building to the rear and roughly doubling the floor area. Subsequent alterations have left little if any visible evidence of the original interior work, but much of the Victorian detail has survived, as well as a complete set of bentwood court room furniture with cane seats.

There is some uncertainty of the exact date for the original building. As early as 1782 a petition was filed requesting that the county seat

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

CONTINUATION SHEET

8.1 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

be moved from Queenstown to a more convenient location. The first significant levy of £1500 for erecting public buildings was ordered in 1788, and in 1791 a further levy of £600 was approved. The Court House was certainly under construction by 1792 and may have been complete by 1794. Dr. Radoff noted in Volume II of his study of Maryland Court Houses and records that one reference may indicate the Court House was still under construction as late as 1796.

Extensive repairs were authorized in 1868 and again in 1876. The latter renovation was undertaken by J. Crawford Neilson, a noted Baltimore architect, and the construction was executed by Captain James Smith, a Centreville builder. The cost of this work came to \$6800. In October 1877 a second contract was signed with Smith to complete the court room.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

QA-146

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Orlando Ridout V, Historic Sites Surveyor

ORGANIZATION

Queen Anne's County Historical Society

STREET & NUMBER

DATE

10/30/81

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Centreville

STATE

Maryland

Field Notebook QA-XX; Recorded November 5, 1980.

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438

CONTINUATION SHEET

9.1 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Emory, Frederick. Queen Anne's County, Maryland.

Baltimore, 1950.

Perry, Shaw, and Hepburn. "Regional Architectural
Survey of Buildings of Eastern Maryland".

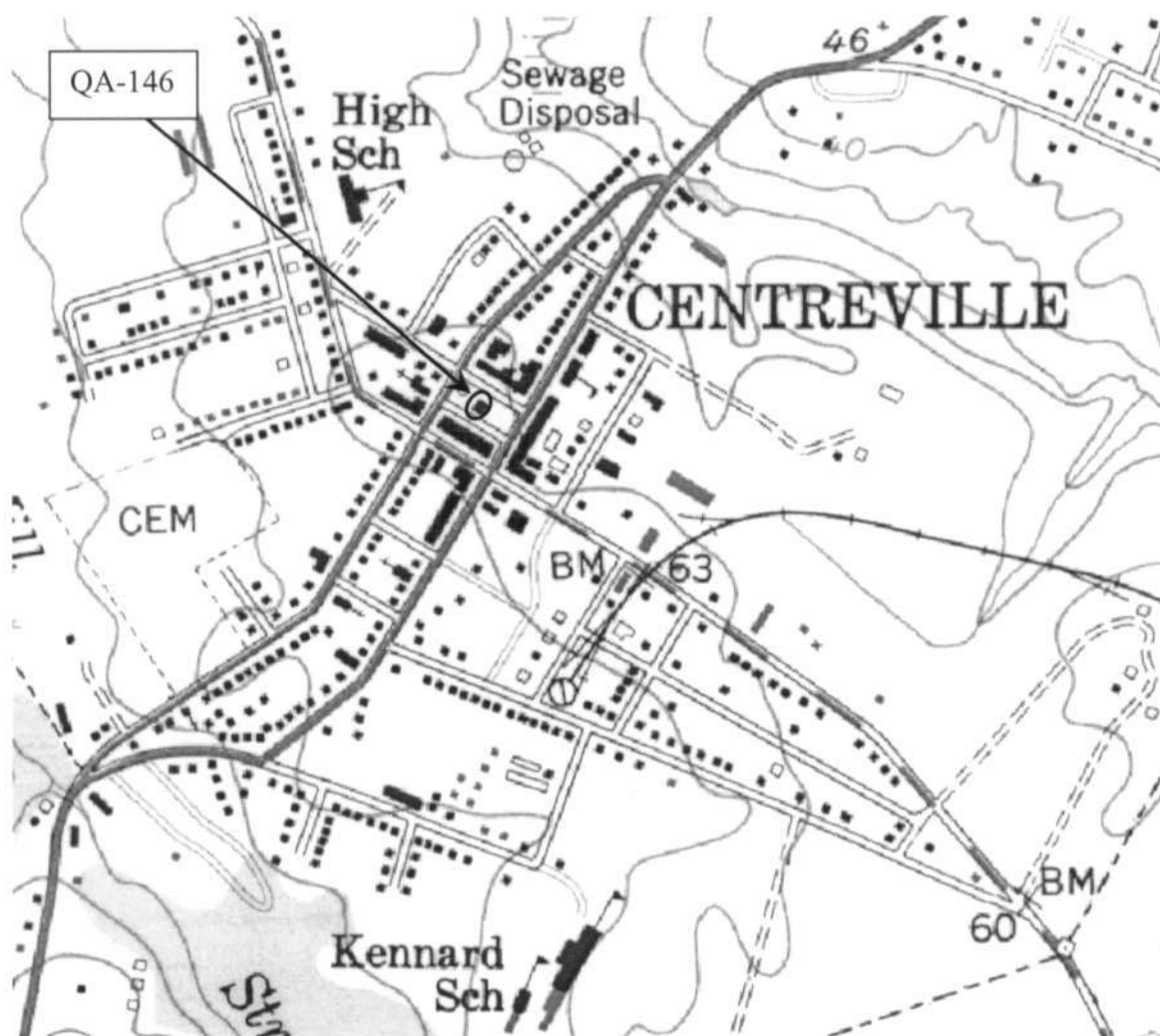
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Radoff, Morris L. The County Courthouses and Records
of Maryland. Annapolis, 1960.

QUEEN ANNE C9

[illegible]

QA-146
Queen Anne's County Court House
Court House Square
Centreville
Centreville Quad.
Queen Anne's Co.





QA-146

Queen Anne's County Courthouse

Mary McCarthy

Spring/Summer 2003

Digital color photo on file at MHT



QA-1416

Queen Anne's County Courthouse

Mary McCarthy

Spring/Summer 2003

Digital color photo on file at MHT



Q.A. Co. Courthouse, Centreville - Q.A. - 146

2-42

Q.A. Co. Courthouse, Centreville - Q.A. - 146

MBB

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QA-146 Queen Anne's County Court
 House
 Centreville, Maryland
 Orlando Ridout V 1981
 Rear view from Southwest



Q.A. #146
Queen Anne's County Courthouse

JWW - Spring 1973



Q.A. # 146

Queen Anne's County Courthouse

JWU - Spring 1973



THE COURTHOUSE
QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY

OLDEST COURTHOUSE IN CONTINUOUS USE
IN THE STATE OF MARYLAND. THE BUILDING WAS
AUTHORIZED BY ACTS OF ASSEMBLY AFTER THE
REMOVAL OF THE COUNTY SEAT FROM QUEENSTOWN
TO CHESTER MILLS, LATER CENTREVILLE. IT WAS
ERECTED BETWEEN 1791 AND 1796 ON LAND
PURCHASED FROM ELIZABETH NICHOLSON ON HER
PORTION OF "CHESTERFIELDS," THE ESTATE OF
HER GRANDFATHER, WILLIAM SWEATMAN.

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY
1971

Q.A. #146

Queen Anne's County Courthouse

JWU - Spring 1973



Q.A. # 146

Queen Anne's County
Court house

JWU - Spring 1973



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Annapolis, MD. 21401

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Tom Darden
Tom's Photo

DARDEN HAS NEGATIVE

Tom's Photo
210-A Hilltop Lane
Annapolis, Md. 21403